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The Curse of Militarism.

BY HERBERT W. HORWILL.

"Of all the men we ever met who knew history, he had the most profound horror of militarism." This extract from the London *Spectator's* biographical note on the late Mr. William Clarke is especially significant as coming from a journal which has itself found so many excellent reasons for the slaying of one's fellow-creatures. Such a sentence touches only one side of a richly-endowed life, but, even if there were nothing to add, it would in these days serve as an honorable and enviable epitaph. It happens that one of the last of Mr. Clarke's contributions to the press illustrates very effectively both the earnestness of his convictions and the reasonableness of their basis. In the current number of the *Young Man*, an English monthly, appears an article of his, entitled "The Curse of Militarism," which Mr. James Bryce has described as "a vigorous and timely deliverance on a matter of great present concern to Englishmen and Americans." "We and they," continues Mr. Bryce, "have been the nations that have longest resisted the unhappy reaction towards barbarous ideals and dangerous mental habits, and if we now yield, we shall have less excuse than the nations of the European Continent."

The article thus commended to the attention of American as well as English readers deals lightly with the sentimental objections to war, on the ground that these have often been stated and emphasized. Mr. Clarke's attack on militarism is mainly supported by the less usual but equally powerful argument that it involves inevitable moral reaction. He approaches the subject from the standpoint of Darwinian conceptions of nature, in spite of the fact that the doctrine of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest has been pleaded in favor of the view that war promotes progress. For an illustration of this misinterpretation of the true meaning of evolution, Mr. Clarke goes to Dr. Lyman Abbott's speech at the Congregational Council at Boston, in which the sword was regarded as a preparation for the gospel. "We have heard a good deal," is Mr. Clarke's comment, "of what Christ would do if he were in London or Chicago; had he been in Boston on that occasion, I think he would have repeated that awful saying, 'I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity!'" On the other hand, Mr. Clarke brings high scientific authority to witness that the progress of mankind in any moral sense is due only partly to strife; indeed, that its leading factor has been coöperation.

Starting, then, from the fundamental truth that man is a social animal, and that his development must be expected through amity rather than through conflict, Mr. Clarke has no difficulty in showing that war is an enemy to the only kind of evolution that is worth having. It reanimates "the ape and tiger," instead of eliminating them. The ancient proverb, *Inter arma silent leges*, is significant in this connection. "For what is it to silence the laws? It is to substitute brute force for reason, to deprive citizens of moral security, to put back the clock of civilization, and to draw once more into the human mind the devils of greed, robbery, hatred, murder, which the moral forces of the world were just beginning to expel from what the apostle tells us should be the temples of the Holy Spirit. Interpret that phrase how you will, it is clear that the qualities of mind induced by

militarism are fatal to those other qualities, which every thinker and teacher throughout history has endeavored to plant in the human animal so as to raise him to the spiritual level." Further, the anti-social motive of individual aggrandizement, as opposed to the common benefit, is more and more coming to be the principal motive for war. Mr. Clarke, who attributes the Transvaal War to the designs of the Rand millionaires, suggests that in the matter of Cuba and the Philippines also the old words about patriotism and loyalty are being used to cover greed of private gain.

It is to be noted that the argument, as to the bracing moral effect of war upon the combatants, appeals more to sentimentalists who stay at home than to the men who are actually at the front. The arm-chair thinker may pronounce it beneficent, but General Sherman calls it "hell." It was pointed out long ago by Dr. Channing that those who advocate war on the ground of the self-sacrifice exhibited in it might as well advocate arson on the ground that thereby there is scope for the heroism of members of fire brigades. Mr. Clarke, in like manner, points to the opportunities for heroism afforded by storms at sea, and declares that "there is more moral heroism in a coal-mine, or at the London docks, in one day than on the field of battle in a year." This heroism, too, is not marred by any infusion of hatred to one's enemy, such as is inevitable in the very nature of war.

Indeed, Mr. Clarke goes so far as to say — what to many will be rank blasphemy, but may nevertheless be simple truth — that war and preparations for war, instead of promoting a heroic frame of mind, usually make for precisely the opposite. "War finds the officers thinking of promotion, the contractors thinking of profits, statesmen thinking of gains for their country as against some other country, journalists thinking of how they can most effectively blacken the opposing people, and the multitude thinking of another sensation to throw its blinding glare on the gray background of everyday life." Mr. Clarke does not argue that war has never evoked high moral qualities, but he makes the reasonable demand that we must look to the facts of to-day, in our present stage of moral evolution, instead of falling back upon the ancient examples of Miltiades or Camillus. He examines the crowds that thronged London streets on Mafeking night, and is unable to find in this war-drunken multitude those qualities of fortitude, justice, magnanimity and sanity, which are essential features of true heroism.

For war, even at the best, means the hypnotizing of a whole nation, which behaves in consequence with no less absurdity than a hypnotized man. "All other nations note the absurdity, just as do the spectators of the hypnotic show, and they express themselves as to the folly. But so far is the national patient gone that he becomes very angry at this criticism, puts it down to envy and malice, holds erect to heaven his flaming countenance, and talks some nonsense about 'splendid isolation.' As well might an 'isolated' patient in a fever hospital boast of his condition." Will the hypnotized victim awake before all that is noblest and best in his life has perished through his illusions? That these illusions are fatal, there can be no doubt; for history, as well as reason, abundantly justifies the conclusion of Mr. Clarke's article, that "the game of militarism does not pay, physically, economically, financially. It spells ruin."